

Reading Public Schools

Allergy Guidelines

Elementary Level

Guidelines and Procedures

In order to minimize the incidence of life-threatening allergic reactions, the Reading Public Schools (RPS) will implement the following guidelines and procedures in all the elementary schools for all school-day activities, district-sponsored before/after-school activities, and PTO events.

School Nurses

1. RPS will make all efforts to provide full-time nurses. Because food-allergies are a health issue, potentially requiring the administration of prescription medicine (Epinephrine) in the event of an allergic reaction, the presence of a full-time nurse in each school is critical.
2. Each school Principal/Nurse will serve as the lead resource in the school regarding the implementation of the guidelines in that school. The School Nurse will serve as an invaluable medical and guideline resource for other school personnel who are responsible for various aspects of the guidelines, not only in emergency situations but also on an ongoing basis.
3. Nurses will only use latex free gloves.

504 Plans and Allergy Emergency Action Plans

1. The school will maintain a 504 Plan and Allergy Emergency Care Plan (AECP for any student identified with a potentially life-threatening allergy.
 - a. A 504 Plan is an accommodation plan for any student who has a "physical or mental impairment which substantially limits one or more major life activities, has a records of such or is regarded as having such an impairment" so that they may access FAPE (Free Appropriate Public Education)
 - b. An Allergy Emergency Care Plan (AECP) is a separate document, which includes the student's, name, the allergen(s), the warning signs and symptoms, what to do in case of an emergency, phone numbers of parents, doctors, and allergists.
2. The School Nurse and school Principal/designee in conjunction with the student's parent(s)/guardian(s) and the primary care provider/allergist, will help prepare a 504 Plan and an AEAP for any student identified with an allergy that substantially limits a major life function. The 504 Plan and AEAP will be updated and reviewed annually by the School Nurse, the student's parent(s), and primary care provider and/or allergist.
3. At the elementary levels, the 504 Plan and AEAP will be available in the Nurse's office and student's classroom.
4. At the elementary level, photographs of students with life threatening allergies (LTA) should be attached to the 504 Plan and/or AECP with permission of the parents.
5. A student's AEAP will always accompany his/her personal EpiPen.
6. School Nurses should identify students with a life-threatening allergies or health issues, and schools should establish plans to manage dietary restrictions and/or health concerns for those students during emergency procedures (such as lockdowns, evacuations, etc.) and when town emergency services may be limited.

Training/Education for School Personnel

1. The Reading Public Schools will provide training and education on the food allergy guidelines and procedures for all staff, including but not limited to administrators, teachers, paraprofessionals, custodians, secretaries, food service employees, student teachers, and substitutes.
2. RPS will provide the training which will include, but not be limited to:
 - A description/definition of severe allergies and a discussion of the most common food, medication, latex and stinging insect allergies;
 - The signs and symptoms of anaphylaxis;
 - The correct use of epinephrine auto-injectors, such as an EpiPen, Auvi-Q, and Adrenallick.
 - Specific steps to follow in the event of an emergency;
 - The storage and placement of individual EpiPens and AEAPs;
 - The purpose and contents of the AEAP and 504 plans.
3. The Director of Nursing or the Principal and/or their designees will schedule the training and implement training for all appropriate employees prior to the start of the school year in addition to follow-up training midyear when necessary.
4. The Principal, in consultation with the School Nurse, will notify all staff, student teachers, substitutes and parents of students in the affected class about the nature of life-threatening allergies faced by students. Notification will be made as soon as the school is notified of a new LTA.
5. This notification will include an explanation of the severity of the health threat and a description of signs and symptoms of which to be aware of. A required orientation meeting will be held between the food-allergic child's parent(s), teacher, and School Nurse to discuss the various aspects of the child's allergy and action plan. All efforts should be made to complete this meeting prior to the school year.

Student and Parent Education

1. It is recommended that all elementary schools establish a WASH committee (Wellness, Allergy, Safety, and Health) comprised of parents and staff. WASH committees would allow for interschool collaboration and continued sharing of best practices. WASH could also serve as a vehicle for ongoing review of guidelines and provide consultation/communication regarding specific issues and events.
2. Our goal with building-based education is to raise the level of awareness about the problem of life-threatening allergies, in order that we might create a safe and supportive environment for learning for children with serious allergies. Examples of building-based education might include:
 - PTO workshop on Food Allergies;
 - Integrating Food Allergies in the *Understanding Disabilities* curriculum;
 - Including the RPS Allergy Guidelines in all student handbooks;
 - Promoting alternatives to foods (ex: pencils and stickers) for birthday and holiday celebrations;
 - Delivering a classroom segment on allergy education/awareness.
3. When a LTA is already known by the school, the parents of affected students will be notified prior to the start of the school year. The notice will state that their child will be in a room with a food-allergic child and subsequently an allergen-free room. This gives parents an opportunity to ease into the food adjustment prior to the start of the new school year.

4. When a new diagnosis of a LTA is made, a new notification letter will go out immediately to classroom parents.
5. A follow up letter will be sent to the allergic classmate's parents in August educating them on life-threatening allergies. The letter will include the protocol for the classroom and cafeteria based on the needs of the children with the LTAs in the class. All parents will be required to return the letter with their signature indicating that they have read and agree to the classroom and cafeteria protocol for that particular year.

Classroom Protocol

1. At the elementary level, when the student's medical need is clearly documented by the primary care physician or an allergy doctor, allergen-free classrooms will be created. Allergen-free classrooms will require all students to have allergen-free snacks and accommodations for lunch as per the LTA child's 504.
2. Allergens identified in an LTA student's plan are restricted in that classroom.
3. All schools will be "latex free." Schools are encouraged to clearly communicate this to staff, student, and community by providing examples of products that commonly contain latex (such as balloons).
4. All elementary classrooms should be "food free." Food-related activities are prohibited in classrooms (*with the exception of daily snacks that students bring from home*). To reduce contact reactions and potential for cross-contamination, no food should be used as part of curriculum, class lessons, projects, arts, crafts, etc.
5. Students' snacks brought from home should *not* be shared with other children.
6. Food should *not* be used as rewards (candy, pizza, ice cream parties, etc.) or as manipulatives for classroom activities.
7. The school will promote "NO FOOD TRADING" and "NO UTENSIL SHARING" policies.
8. All restrictions regarding foods for consumption also apply to materials used for classroom activities or projects. For example, any food items or *organic* materials (such as birdseed, play dough, shelled peanuts, rice, beans, macaroni, Cheerios, etc.) are restricted from the classroom.
9. Former food containers (such as empty milk cartons, egg cartons, peanut butter jars, etc.) are restricted from the classroom.
10. Classroom celebrations or parties will find safe and inclusive ways to celebrate without involving food. Instead, the focus might involve a shared activity such as a craft or game, and rewards or prizes might include special pencils, stickers, etc.
11. Shared bins/totes for carrying student lunch bags to/from the cafeteria or for field trips should be carefully reviewed for cross contamination potential from contact or spillage. Putting individual lunches into Ziploc plastic bags is encouraged. All student lunches should also be clearly labeled.
12. Involving animals or animal accessories within the classroom (for instance, classroom "pets," animal visits, pet food, etc.) must be pre-approved by the Principal and School Nurse, and should be consistent with state law, school district policy, RPS Allergy Guidelines, individual student plans, and any other allergy needs of students within the school.
13. All students and staff will be encouraged to wash their hands after eating and/or handling food in the classroom. The use of water/soap in a sink is preferable but when sinks are not available in or near the classroom, disposable wipes kept in the classroom and disposed of immediately are an option.

14. It is recommended that if schools publish a suggested supply list, they may want to consider adding approved hand wipes—(such as Wet-Ones Hypoallergenic Hand Wipes).
15. A copy of the child's AECP and an EpiPen will be stored in each of the student's classrooms at all times (or may travel with the student, according to directions in the student's plan).
16. In certain circumstances, an EpiPen and AEAP will travel with the child between classes, to the playground, to the gym, at the parent's request if part of the 504 plan.
17. The school will provide allergen-free classrooms with a working 2-way intercom and/or telephone for quick communication with the School Nurse in the event of an allergic reaction.
18. If there are special/rare circumstances when classroom/school protocols may not be followed (for instance, coordinating student breakfasts or allowing gum/mints during the state assessment days), the Principal and School Nurse should carefully consider options given the allergy concerns in the school, and consultation with the WASH committee is recommended. Any aberration from the general guidelines should be communicated with sufficient advance notice and with explanation to students and families. Parents of LTA students should also be consulted in advance.

Field Trips Protocol

1. As field trips and buses are an extension of the classroom, all the above classroom protocols pertain to field trips as well.
2. Students should not eat food or access lunch bags while on the bus.
3. If the specifics of any field trip or off-campus activity might present unique challenges in adhering to protocols or might present allergy concerns of any kind, it is recommended that the Principal and School Nurse review all details carefully, consult with the school's WASH committee, and provide all relevant information well ahead of time to all families involved.
4. Whenever students travel on field trips for school, a clear plan to activate Emergency Medical Services (911) should be developed for and reviewed by all teachers and chaperones. Parents of the allergic child should be consulted during the development of this plan. Teachers leading the field trip should bring with them the procedure for contacting EMS. This must include the local emergency response number for the area since 911 does not patch to the local emergency response center.
5. Field trips need to be chosen carefully; no child should be excluded from a field trip due to the potential of unavoidable allergen exposure.
6. The field trip permission slip should include the allergy precautions for the trip.
7. At the elementary level:
 - The AEAP and EpiPen will accompany the allergic student on all field trips.
 - If the parent of the LTA student is not available to attend the field trip, the student will automatically be placed in the teacher's/designee's group.

Cafeteria Protocol

All cafeteria protocols should include, but not be limited, to the following:

- A monitoring system for the LTA children and their class table should be established.
- An inclusive dining experience for the LTA children should be provided.
- A hand washing procedure should be established by the Principal and School Nurse.

1. Cafeteria Tables and Seating

Examples of Cafeteria tables/seating protocols in the Elementary schools:

- The entire class will sit together during lunch, and an allergen-free table will be designated for the class.
 - Allergen-free tables will be designated by a posted sign.
 - A monitor will be assigned to supervise these tables during the entire lunch period. The monitor will ensure that allergen-free protocols are being followed and will monitor the food-allergic children at the table for any potential reactions, etc.
 - These tables will be cleaned prior to the beginning of each lunch session and again at the end of the lunch session.
 - The entire class will remain allergen free in the classroom only but will continue to sit as a class together in the cafeteria. The LTA children will sit at the end of the table and will be closely monitored.
 - The tables are assigned a monitor to supervise these tables during the entire lunch period. The monitor will monitor the food-allergic children at that table for any potential reactions, etc.
 - These tables will be cleaned prior to the beginning of each lunch session and again at the end of the lunch session.
2. RPS will promote "NO FOOD TRADING" AND "NO UTENSIL SHARING" PRACTICES in all schools with particular focus at the elementary school level.
 3. Food service employees will only use latex-free gloves.
 4. The Food Services Director will be trained how to read product labels to recognize food allergens.
 5. The Food Services Director will check allergy alerts from the Food Allergy and Anaphylaxis Network (FAAN) on a regular basis via email.
 6. The Food Services Director will contact manufacturers to ensure that all food sold in the schools have ingredient labels. Ingredient labels will be accumulated by the Food Services Director to maintain on file.
 7. The Food Services Director will limit the purchase and distribution of food containing peanuts and tree-nuts since they are the most life-threatening allergens.
 8. All students and staff will be encouraged to wash their hands after eating and/or handling food.

PTO and other Before/After-School Events for Students

1. It is recommended that a PTO representative attend a WASH committee meeting prior to planning an event in order to present plans involving food and to ensure appropriate accommodations/options are provided for students.
2. Consultation with the Principal and School Nurse is required.
3. Provide hand washing locations/stations or wipes for hands and tables at all events.
4. All events serving food and/or selling food are to be peanut and tree nut free.
5. Event announcements/notices are to state peanut and tree nut free.

6. Pre-packaged foods with intact labels are preferable options for food choices. (If food is without packaging, post ingredients or provide a binder of the labels for all food items at an event.)
7. Post signage if foods contain any of the remaining six common allergens:
 - Milk, eggs, gluten, soy, fish and shellfish.
8. When ordering food in for an event from a local restaurant/caterer, volunteers should ask for ingredients, and indicate foods must be free of peanut and tree nut products. (Examples of foods that may contain peanuts include pizza, chili, egg rolls.)
9. If food will be provided at an event (such as a movie night or dance), ensure that plans are in place to handle a possible emergency. Provide adequate and trained supervision and prompt access to EMS.
10. When promoting an event, be clear what food will be provided and whom to contact for more information.

Custodial Protocol

1. The Principal will establish a procedure to instruct the custodial staff and/or cafeteria staff to:
 - a. thoroughly clean allergen-free tables and chairs, and
 - b. sweep the floors under and around allergen-free tables and chairs
2. Prior to the start of each lunch shift or after other uses of the cafeteria.
3. Separate disposable cloths and cleaning solution should be used on the allergen-free tables
4. All soaps and cleaning solutions need to be allergen-free and approved by the school district.
5. All schools will only use latex free gloves.

Emergency Response Protocol

1. The Principal is responsible for creating a system-wide emergency plan for addressing life-threatening allergic reactions. This plan will be included in all food-allergy training for employees (including substitutes) and will be posted in the appropriate public places. This plan shall identify personnel who will:
 - a. Remain with the student
 - b. Assess the emergency at hand
 - c. Refer to the student's AEAP
 - d. Administer the EpiPen
 - e. Contact Emergency Response personnel (ex: 9-1-1, EMTs); when placing the call, specify that ALS (Advanced Life Services) are needed because of an allergic reaction and indicate the number on the school's outside door closest to the student
 - f. Send someone to meet the Emergency Response personnel
 - g. Notify school administration
 - h. Attend to student's classmates
 - i. Accompany student to emergency care facility

j. Notify the parent or guardian

The plan should also identify someone (usually the student's Teacher and/or School Nurse) who will assist the student's re-entry into school.

2. All cell phones owned by the school will be pre-programmed with the phone number for the Reading Police Department (781-944-1212 or 781-944-3131) and the Reading Fire Department (781-944-1212 or 781-944-3131) to ensure speedy response. (NOTE: Most cell phones do not have a Reading prefix, therefore if one calls 911, they will get the state police barracks in Framingham.)
3. EpiPens that have been administered should be given to the EMTs upon their arrival. The EMTs will either take the EpiPen with them for potential evaluation by the Emergency Room staff or they will provide instructions for proper disposal.
4. Health/Allergy Emergency drills should be performed in all allergy classrooms annually.

EpiPen Protocol

1. Whenever an EpiPen (or other epinephrine auto-injector) is administered, an Emergency Response unit (ex: 911) will be notified that an auto-injector was administered and called to the scene. Emergency personnel will evaluate the student and determine the appropriate action.
2. EpiPens (those belonging to the school and those prescribed to the students) will be available in the Nurse's office and in other clearly designated locations as specified in the children's 504 plans.
3. All EpiPens will be stored in an approved school container. For example, an easily identifiable red bag.
4. All EpiPen management and training will be the responsibility of the School Nurse. This will include monitoring EpiPen expirations and replacements.